

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

SP-02 PRS-01 EB-03 /037 W

----- 019733

R 240918Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7830

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15516

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE

SUBJ: ELIAS SARKIS

1. HAD LONG TALK WITH ELIAS SARKIS LAST EVENING. HE HAD EARLIER EXPRESSED TO 4 OR 5 PEOPLE HIS DEEP PESSIMISM WHICH HAD ONLY HIT HIM YESTERDAY MORNING. HERETOFORE HE HAD BEEN RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC FOLLOWING FRANGIE AND KARAME STATEMENTS SUBSEQUENT TO COUVE DE MURVILL MISSION. THERE STATEMENTS IT WILL RE-CALLED INDICATED AREAS OF NEGOTIATION AND GIVE-AND-TAKE ON BOTH SIDES. SARKIS HAD BEEN CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS MOST SIGNIFICANT AND VEN SUCH "DISASTERS" AS DEC 6 MASSACRES WOULD NOT IN HIS VIEW ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS AT THE VERY TOP.

2. YESTERDAY MORNING, HOWEVER, HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY A MAN IN WHOM HE HAS TOTAL CONFIDENCE THAT FRANGIE HAS RE-TREATED COMPLETELY FROM HIS MODERATE POSITION AND IS IN A LESS CONCILIATORY MOOD THAN EVER HERETOFORE. ACCORDING TO SARKIS, HE IS NOW CONVINCED THAT PARTITION IS THE ONLY RECOURSE, AND HE AND HIS SON TONY ARE OPENLY ADVOCATING SUCH ACTION-- TONY PUBLICLY AND THE PRESIDENT PRIVATELY.

3. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH ME, SARKIS SAID THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME HE WAS AT A TOTAL LOSS OF WHERE TO GO AS LONG AS FRANGIE CONTINUED TO BE PRESIDENT. HE ALSO OPINED
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THAT CHAMOUN WAS EQUALLY, IF NOT EVEN MORE, INTRANSIGENT.

SARKIS DOES NOT RPT NOT CURRENTLY SEE A GROUP OF EFFECTIVE MODERATE MARONITES BEING FORMED AND NOTES THAT THE WEAPONS AND THE DEMAGOGUERY ARE ALL IN THE HANDS OF THE LUNATIC ELEMENTS.

4. SARKIS SAID HE IS PROCEEDING JAN 4 TO IMF INTERIM COMMITTEE AT JAMAICA. THIS MEETING WILL TAKE 4 OR 5 DAYS, AND I ASKED HIM IF HE WERE PLANNING TO VISIT WASHINGTON. HE SAID HE HAD NO INTENTION OF SO DOING, AND WHEN I INQUIRED WHETHER HE WOULD DO SO IF IT WERE CONSIDERED HELPFUL, HE SAID HE COULD ALWAYS TRY.

5. SARKIS IS DEFINITELY NOT CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A TRIP TO WASHINGTON. IT HAS, HOWEVER, OCCURRED TO ME THAT WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING A SERIES OF RELATIVE IDIOTS SUCH AS RAYMOND EDDE, CHARLES MALIK, ETC., AND THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING TO BE GAINED IN MEETING WITH ONE OF THE FEW STILL STABLE AND REASONABLE LEBANESE. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, SARKIS IS DEFINITELY STILL AMONG THE 4 OR 5 LEADING CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENCY, AND WHILE HE IS DOING NOTHING TO ADVANCE HIS POSITION, HE IS HIGH ON EVERY POLL. I CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT SARKIS WOULD FIND IT POSSIBLE TO VISIT WASHINGTON, BUT IF DEPARTMENT BELIEVES IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL, I THINK THERE IS A 50-50 CHANCE IT COULD BE ARRANGED. PLEASE INSTRUCT.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL DISORDERS, NEGOTIATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT15516
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750447-0134
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751213/aaaaakqs.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <08 DEC 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELIAS SARKIS
TAGS: PINS, LE, (SARKIS, ELIAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006